

# Adopt a spot

For this issue of FLM, we asked **Tatachilla Lutheran College** senior students to seek out an individual who is going above the call of duty to contribute to the region – and to write a story about them. This article was written by student **Caydi Young**.

There's no doubt that Chris Lemar has a deep connection to the ocean – saltwater seems to run through his veins. He grew up as a barefoot 'grom' in the seventies and spent his youth hooning along the mid-coast esplanade (aka 'the mid'). As an adult, Chris moved around, travelling interstate and encountering some of Australia's most pristine slices of paradise – many littered with only native shrubs and natural beauty.

The surf and community along the mid-coast eventually lured him back. Perhaps there was something in the water, or perhaps time spent away from his old haunts allowed him to, as he puts it, look at this place with a different set of eyes. Over the ensuing years he saw that his treasured coastline needed help and after a bit of time and a few conversations with his friend, Carlee Lynch, the two co-founded the Adopt A Spot Scheme in 2017.

The goal of the program is to minimise the waste entering the ocean through mobilising volunteers to regularly collect and remove rubbish. Volunteers to the scheme unofficially 'adopt' their favourite spot along our beaches, rivers and creeks and it becomes their job to look after that spot through regular clean-ups. Powered by the philosophy that every little bit counts, the scheme is having a huge impact on the health of our coast. In 2018, Chris and his team of over one hundred volunteers collected 110,000 cigarette butts that had been discarded on the ground. They also accumulated close to three tonnes of littered waste which was collected from sixty-six locations, covering seven council regions.

As we take a seat at Chris' coffee table, there's a distinct nose of salt in the air. The shore is literally metres away from his doorstep. At age 59, Chris wears a thick, resilient skin that's seen many years out in the sun. You'll often see Chris during the winter months checking the surf in a pair of shorts. Not only is he passionate about where he lives; the coast is his way of life.

The Adopt a Spot Scheme all started with collecting and recording rubbish from car parks along the mid. It was evident from these collections that cigarette butts were a major problem. Chris made and positioned simple plastic tubs along the Esplanade for people to throw their butts into, instead of dropping them on the ground. These tubs have since been turned into permanent fixtures and can be found along the coastline from Sellicks Beach to Glenelg North.

Chris shares with me some of the things he has uncovered and learned while doing these regular cleans. Chief among them, how just a single act of careless rubbish disposal has ramifications for years to come. Take a Mellow Yellow drink bottle cap, found floating in the creek mouth. 'That was replaced by Lift in 1995, so that bottle cap has been floating its way down after every rain event getting closer and closer to the ocean until we finally pulled it out,' says Chris. An old Arnott's chip packet found on Australia Day 2018 with a use-by date of 1982 shows – quite literally – how deep the problem goes. 'That's what's laying under the sand,' he explains. 'When you get a big storm,



Above: Adopt a Spot's Chris Lemar. (To Adopt a Spot of your own, go to their Facebook page and send them a message!)

whatever is under the sand gets washed up and put out into the ocean and washes back again.'

I reach out to Chris 'Radar' Bowen, a close friend of Chris' for over twenty years. They both represent the archetypal mid-coast local with a lifetime of shared stories, good laughs and many waves. 'Most people will complain and whinge that something needs to be done. Not Chris. He rolls his sleeves up and gets on with the job,' says Radar. 'Chris is altruistic, he truly cares for others.'

Chris may seem like he sets an unattainable standard as an ambassador for the community and caretaker of our coast, but in reality he's no different from you and me. He's a local bloke who loves where he lives. He thrives off seeing people enjoy our coastline and living a coastal life that is healthy and rubbish free.

So on behalf of the mid, Chris, we thank you for your dedication and support of the community and your hard work in keeping our coastline litter free. We need more people like you. 